



Abuse of Individuals at Risk: An Overview

Wisconsin

Department of Health Services,
Bureau of Aging and
Disability Resources



Overview

- **What is abuse, neglect, and exploitation**
- **Who is abused**
- **Types of abuse**
- **Who are abusers**
- **Where abuse occurs**



Overview

- **County reporting system**
- **Types of reporters**
- **Who to call, when**
- **Closing comments**



What is Abuse?

- **Intentional or neglectful act, omission**
- **Caregiver, family member, other trusted person**
- **Results in, may result in harm to an individual**



Who is Abused?

- **Men, women**
- **All ages, races, cultures, religions, socioeconomic groups**
- **Reduced capacity to care for self/dependency on others**



What is Abuse?

- **How harm occurs**
 - **Unintentional**
 - **Intentional**
 - **Self neglect**



What is Abuse?

- **Unintentional harm**
 - **Accidental**
 - Harm suffered in “accident” may not fit explanation
 - **Ill equipped caregiver**
 - **Uncontrollable aggressive behavior by individual**



What is Abuse?

- **Intentional harm**
 - **Power and control**
 - **Purposeful**
 - **Pattern of behavior**
 - **Abuser may manipulate others in relationship with individual**



What is Abuse?

- **Self neglect**
 - Individual fails to provide for own needs
 - No abuser



Types of Abuse

- **Abuse**
 - **Physical**
 - **Emotional**
 - **Sexual**
 - **Confinement/restraint**
 - **Treatment without consent**



Types of Abuse

- **Financial exploitation**
- **Neglect**
- **Self neglect**



Physical Abuse

- **Intentional act**
- **Results in physical pain, injury, impairment**
- **How it occurs**
 - **Physical assaults**
 - **Other**



Signs of Physical Abuse

- **Obvious (bruises, broken bones, burns, etc.)**
 - Broken eyeglasses, hearing aids, devices
- **Injuries not properly cared for; repeated, unexplained**



Signs of Physical Abuse

- **Frequent use of emergency room, hospital care**
- **Actions to prevent discovery of abuse**
 - **Access denied to communication, mobility aids**
 - **Doctor “hopping”**



Emotional Abuse

- **Intentional use of language, behavior**
- **Intimidate, humiliate, ridicule, threaten, frighten, harass, coerce, blame**
- **Results in emotional pain, distress**
- **Non-verbal forms**



Signs of Emotional Abuse

- **Individual behaviors**
 - **Helpless, withdrawn, non-responsive**
 - **Agitated, fearful**
 - **Blames self**



Signs of Emotional Abuse

- **Abuser behaviors**
 - **Yells, threatens, belittles**
 - **Speaks for, controls individual**
 - **Threatens to institutionalize**
 - **Threatens to harm, kill animals**



Sexual Abuse

- **Non-consensual sexual contact of any kind**
 - OR when individual incapable of giving consent
- **Categories**
 - Hands off
 - Hands on
 - Harmful genital practices



Sexual Abuse

- **Other facts**
 - **Persons with developmental disabilities especially vulnerable**
 - **Most perpetrators are men**



Signs of Sexual Abuse

- **Bruises**
- **STDs, infections**
- **Bleeding, pain, itching**
- **Underclothing torn, bloody, stained**
- **Walking, sitting difficult**
- **Verbal account of incident**



Other Types of Abuse

- **Confinement**
- **Restraint**
- **Treatment without consent**



Financial Exploitation

- **Illegal or improper use of funds, assets, or property**
 - How it occurs
- **Victims most likely to be elderly adults**



Signs of Financial Exploitation

- **Changes in bank account**
- **Disappearance of funds, possessions**
- **Transfer of assets**
- **Changes to will, powers of attorney**
- **Cost of care more important than quality**



Neglect

- **Refusal to provide individual with life necessities**
- **Intentional, unintentional**
 - **Be cautious where excuses made in cases of suspected neglect**



Signs of Neglect

- **Individual's appearance**
- **Food inadequate, spoiled**
- **Unsafe, unclean living conditions**
- **Lack of medical equipment**



Self-Neglect

- **Retains responsibility for own care, but fails to provide for needs**
- **Exception for competent persons who make voluntary, informed choices**
- **Signs of neglect, self-neglect often, but not always, similar**



Abusers

- **Who they are**
- **Justify abuse, try to hide evidence**
- **Caregiver risk factors**



Where Abuse Occurs

- Home
- Regulated facilities, community settings



Reporting System

- **County agencies**
 - Elder adult at risk
 - Adult at risk
 - Adult protective services
- **Collectively, county APS unit**
- **Agency responsibilities**



Types of Reporters

- **Voluntary reporters**
- **Limited required reporters**
- **Caregiver misconduct reporting system**



Who to Call, When

- **Law enforcement, 911**
 - Life threatening, immediate danger
- **County agency**
- **DHS, Division of Quality Assurance**



Aging & Disability Resource Centers

- Your role
- Connection with colleagues
- Questions
- Thank you



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